

Education Partnerships Approval Procedures

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1. Introduction

This document outlines the procedure to seek approval for an education partnership. It covers the approval process for both new and renewing education partnerships as defined in the [Education Partnerships Policy](#) and should be read alongside this policy.

To initiate the approval process first consult section 2 of the [Education Partnerships Policy](#) to identify the appropriate partnership model and its partnership type (strategic, standard collaborative or recruitment). Then follow the procedure for the relevant partnership type heading below.

The [Education Partnerships Key Characteristics Grid](#) is available for further guidance, or you can contact QSAT or the relevant regional International Partnership Manager for advice.

A Process Flowchart and At a Glance Summary is also available.

The approval process will vary depending on the following information:

- the indicative risk level assigned to your partnership model in the Education Partnerships Models Indicative Risk Assessment Grid (very high, high, medium or low);
- the study level (taught or research);
- the partner location (UK or international).

2. Strategic Partnerships

Refer to section 2.3 of the [Education Partnerships Policy](#) for the list of applicable partnership models.

This type is characterised by large-scale activities at an institutional level. These education partnership models are developed as a strategic institution-level initiative and will be managed through a Strategic Major Project. They have the highest indicative risk score for academic standards and quality.

For further information contact the Strategy Delivery and Transformation Department.

Strategic Transnational Education (TNE) Partnerships (international)

The University's TNE Growth Programme has established a TNE Gateways Framework to manage approval of large-scale strategic TNE partnership proposals.

The proposing faculty should discuss the proposal with the Vice President International, who will decide whether to recommend the proposal for consideration at the TNE Growth Programme Board.

Strategic UK Education Partnerships

The proposing faculty should discuss the proposal with the Vice President Education and Student Experience, who will decide whether to recommend the proposal to University Executive Board for development and approval through a University Strategic Major Project.

3. Standard Collaborative Provision

Refer to section 2.4 of the [Education Partnerships Policy](#) for the list of applicable partnership models.

This type covers education partnership models that result in jointly developed programmes with one or more partner with or without degree-awarding powers. The programme is jointly conceived and offers an enhanced student experience that is only possible through partnership delivery. They have either a high or medium indicative risk score for academic standards and quality.

For further information contact the Quality, Standards and Accreditation Team (QSAT).

Stage 1 – Strategic Approval and Initial Partner Due Diligence

Responsible	Collaboration Sponsor
Accountable	Faculty Operations Board (FOB) International Executive Board* (delegated to Partner Confirmation Panel)
Consulted	ADE, ADI*, HoS, DHoSE, DC**, DoI*, FDGS**, Finance, Professional Service Teams across SAAA and GRAM as applicable.
Informed	EPSC
Documentation	Proposal form (international / UK); Risk Assessment
Associated Process	New / Renewing Programme Strategic Approval Export Control Group (referral by PCP where applicable)

*for international partnerships only

**for research partnerships only

1.1 The Collaboration Sponsor consults School and Faculty stakeholders:

- Faculty Education and Quality Enhancement Manager (FEQEM) / Head of Faculty Student Administration (HoFSA) to confirm the appropriate partnership model and approval route.
- Associate Dean Education (ADE) / Deputy Head of School Education (DHoSE) and (for international partners) Associate Dean International (ADI) / Director of Internationalisation (DoI) to discuss the strategic fit.
- (for research degree models) Faculty Director of the Graduate School (FDGS) and Doctoral College.

1.2a (for UK partnerships) The Collaboration Sponsor completes the Initial Proposal Form for UK and submits to DHoSE for endorsement.

OR

1.2b (for international partnerships) The Collaboration Sponsor completes the International Partnerships Proposal Form and submits it to the ADI for endorsement. The form is reviewed by the [Partnerships team](#) within the

Global Recruitment and Admissions Directorate, who will provide additional partner information and strategic context.

1.3 The Collaboration Sponsor consults faculty stakeholders on the proposal and develops the business case and risk assessment in consultation with their Faculty Finance Manager, DHOSE and (for international partners) DI and/or ADI. This should include a realistic timeframe for development and should be agreed with the partner/partners.

1.4 The Collaboration Sponsor arranges for completed documentation to be considered by Faculty Operations Board (FOB) following local faculty protocols.

1.5 Associated Process: The Collaboration Sponsor should work with the Programme Lead to secure New or Renewing Programme Strategic Approval. Refer to the [Strategic Planning and Insights Sharepoint site](#) for further information. This step should happen in parallel with 1.4, with FOB receiving papers for both partnership and programme approvals considered at the same meeting wherever possible.

1.5a (for UK partnerships) Once FOB support is secured, the Collaboration Sponsor is responsible for communicating the outcome to QSAT and consulted stakeholders listed in 1.1.

1.5b (for international partnerships) Once FOB support is secured, the ADI is responsible for seeking approval to proceed from the Partner Confirmation Panel (PCP), a sub-group of the International Executive Board, and communicating the outcome to the Collaboration Sponsor, QSAT and consulted stakeholders listed in 1.1.

Stage 2 – Full Partner Due Diligence

Responsible	Collaboration Sponsor
Accountable	Education Partnerships Subcommittee (delegated to Due Diligence Approval Panel)
Consulted	Finance, GRAM, HR, Insurance, QSAT, Legal
Informed	AQSS, ESEC, FOB, IEB*

Documentation	Due Diligence Form; Due Diligence Letters and supporting evidence
Associated Process	None

*for international partnerships only

2.1 The Collaboration Sponsor completes relevant sections of the Due Diligence Form and returns it to QSAT together with confirmation of stage 1 approvals.

2.2 QSAT liaises with the Collaboration Sponsor to arrange the exchange of due diligence letters with the partner(s). This is to confirm reciprocal information about financial, regulatory and legal status.

2.3. QSAT collates responses in the Due Diligence Form and arranges for the information to be reviewed by a Due Diligence Approval Panel (DDAP). Depending on the level of risk identified this may be arranged by email correspondence or in a panel meeting.

2.3.1 DDAP membership consists of professional service representatives from QSAT, Human Resources, Finance, Legal Services, Insurance Services, the International Office and any other professional service as identified by the risk assessment in stage 1.

2.3.2 The DDAP are invited to make a judgement about the partnership and associated risks. They may request further information from the partner or refer it on for further scrutiny, depending on the level of risk identified.

2.4 QSAT submit the completed DDAP report and its recommendation to Education Partnerships Subcommittee (EPSC) for consideration.

2.5 Where recommended for approval, EPSC will determine appropriate membership and lines of enquiry for the Education Partnership Approval Panel (EPAP), and any further information that should be provided during Stage 3. For models with indicative risk level of medium the DDAP will also confirm whether a EPAP is required.

2.6 QSAT is responsible for communicating the outcome of stage 2 to the Collaboration Sponsor, and consulted stakeholders listed in 1.1.

Stage 3 – Partnership Approval and Academic Quality Assurance

Responsible	Collaboration Sponsor
Accountable	Education Partnerships Subcommittee (delegated to Education Partnership Approval Panel)
Consulted	ADE, ADI*, DHoSE, DC**, DoI*, FDGS**, Programme and Module Leads, Professional Service Teams across SAAA and GRAM as applicable.
Informed	AQSS, ESEC
Documentation	Operational checklist; EPAP Briefing and Report; Programme Enhancement Action Plan (where applicable); Draft Memorandum of Agreement (where available)
Associated Process	Programme Approval and Review (PAR)

*for international partnerships only

**for research partnerships only

3.1 (for models with indicative risk level medium) proceed to stage 4 unless EPSC made EPAP a requirement at stage 2.

3.2 The Collaboration Sponsor develops the proposed operating model in consultation with relevant professional services and the partner. This will address the roles and responsibilities of each partner in delivery of the programme including:

- governance;
- recruitment, admissions and enrolment;
- student representation;
- assessment;
- student complaints, appeals, transfers, suspension (break in study), withdrawal and termination;
- student support services;

- staffing and learning resources;
- teach-out strategy.

Refer to section 5 Operational Considerations in the [Education Partnership Policy](#) and, and the [Joint and Double Research Degree Framework](#) (for research degree models) for further guidance.

3.3 Associated Process: The Collaboration Sponsor should liaise with the Faculty Curriculum and Quality Assurance Team (CQA) to initiate the [Programme Approval and Review process](#). The [Overview of Programme and Partnership Approval Processes Flowchart](#) shows the typical sequence of events for the two processes.

3.4 QSAT convenes the Education Partnership Approval Panel (EPAP) to assure the quality of the proposed arrangements as they relate to the partnership. Lines of enquiry and membership requirements stipulated by EPSC in stage 2 must be followed.

3.4.1 The EPAP is chaired by a senior University representative such as an Associate Dean (Education), the Chair of EPSC or their nominees. EPAP membership consists of:

- an academic representative with relevant experience, such as a faculty EPSC representative or DoI from outside the proposing Faculty;
- a professional services representative with relevant experience, such as a member of QSAT or HoFSA from outside the proposing Faculty;
- a student representative with relevant experience, such as the SUSU VP Education & Democracy;
- (for research degree models) a representative from the Doctoral College;
- an External Advisor, where recommended by the Chair;
- and any additional members as stipulated by EPSC in stage 2.

3.4.2 The EPAP meets with the programme team and representatives from the partner. For partnership renewals the EPAP will also meet with a selection of current students. It aims to assess the partner's contribution to teaching and learning, and to establish that the learning environment, support services and ethos of the partner will assure an equivalent University of Southampton student experience. The partnership delivery model is considered in more detail and the operational considerations outlined in 3.2 should be discussed.

3.4.3 The EPAP produces a report which will summarise their findings and make one of the following recommendations:

- to approve the proposal / renewal;
- to approve the proposal / renewal subject to conditions of approval and/or recommendations;
- not to approve the proposal / renewal.

3.5 QSAT circulates the report to all involved in the panel meeting and to stakeholders identified in 1.1. Where conditions and/or recommendations of approval have been set, the Programme Team are invited to respond with an action plan. All conditions must be met to the satisfaction of the panel before a recommendation to approve is taken to EPSC.

3.6 QSAT submit the panel's report to EPSC for approval and onward reporting to AQSS and ESEC.

3.7 **Associated process:** The Collaboration Sponsor is responsible for ensuring that the panel's report and programme team response to any conditions and/or recommendations is incorporated into the programme's Enhancement Action Plan and is noted as part of the final programme approval or review meeting. Refer to the [Programme Approval and Review Policy](#) for more details.

3.8 QSAT is responsible for communicating the outcome of stage 3 to the Collaboration Sponsor, panel members and consulted stakeholders listed in 1.1.

Stage 4 – Memorandum of Agreement (MoA)

Responsible	Collaboration Sponsor
Accountable	President and Vice Chancellor or their authorised signatories (as recommended by Legal Services)
Consulted	Programme and Module Leads, Professional Service teams (admin & assessment, admissions, fees, graduate school**, QSAT, student records, visas)
Informed	AQSS, EPSC, ESEC, FOB, IEB*
Documentation	Draft agreement; Legal Request Form
Associated Process	New Programme Creation

*for international partnerships only

**for research partnerships only

4.1 A legal agreement must be in place and signed by both parties before any arrangement commences (including student recruitment).

4.2 The Collaboration Sponsor is responsible for liaising with the partner regarding their requirements for the MoA and briefing QSAT and Legal Services accordingly.

4.3 QSAT raises the Legal Request Form once they are satisfied that all details have been clarified. This may involve prior consultation with the partner and professional service teams, which is coordinated by the Collaboration Sponsor.

4.4 Legal Services is responsible for producing the draft agreement and advising when this will be available for the partner to review.

4.5 The Collaboration Sponsor is responsible for liaising with the partner regarding any queries or amend requests, and in coordinating the drafting process with Legal Services.

4.6 Legal Services arranges for the finalised agreement wording to be signed by an authorised signatory at Southampton and sent to the partner for

countersigning. They will notify the Collaboration Sponsor and QSAT when complete.

4.7 QSAT is responsible for notifying further stakeholders as identified in 1.1 of the completion of the procedure and circulating the countersigned agreement for their records. QSAT maintain a Partnership List that is approved by EPSC at its first meeting each academic year and is available on request.

4.8 The International Partnership Manager is responsible for updating the International Office Partnership Database with countersigned agreement and maintaining accurate records of the partnership.

4.9 **Associated process:** Programme Creation (for new proposals). Once the programme and partnership have been approved and the countersigned agreement is in place, the programme team should liaise with the Curriculum Quality Assurance (CQA) team to arrange programme set-up.

Implementation and Review

Responsible	Collaboration Sponsor
Accountable	Education Partnership Subcommittee
Consulted	Programme and Module Leads, Professional Service teams (admin & assessment, admissions, fees, graduate school**, QSAT, student records, visas)
Informed	AQSS, ESEC, FOB, IEB*
Documentation	Operations Manual; Annual Monitoring Report; Programme regulations (where applicable); Joint Academic Board/equivalent Terms of Reference, minutes and other documentation.
Associated Process	Programme Regulations Scrutiny Group Annual programme monitoring exercise

*for international partnerships only

**for research partnerships only

5.1 Each partnership arrangement must be set up accurately on the University's student systems to meet the University's external reporting Education Partnerships Approval Procedures, January 2026 Page 11 of 18

requirements (HESA), and to ensure that visa regulations are applied correctly to applicants.

5.2 **Associated process:** where the arrangement includes an agreed variation to the University's standard academic regulations, this must be submitted for approval by AQSS (Programme Regulations Scrutiny Group) and published to the University's governance webpages prior to student enrolment.

5.3 The Collaboration Sponsor is responsible for creating and maintaining an Operations Manual for internal use by academic and professional service staff involved in the delivery of the programme. A template is available.

5.4 Promotional materials produced by the partner must be reviewed by the University to ensure that branding and messaging is consistent with the terms of the MoA.

5.5 The Collaboration Sponsor will attend the partnership's Joint Academic Board / equivalent committee which oversees the partnership and operational delivery, and liaise with the University's professional services as required.

5.6 The Collaboration Sponsor is responsible for completing annual partnership monitoring reports for consideration by SPC and onward reporting to EPSC and AQSS. This encourages reflection on areas of enhancement and complements the annual programme monitoring exercise.

Associated process: The partnership annual reports are considered alongside the programme annual reports prepared by the Programme Lead.

5.7 In the fourth year of operation (unless otherwise specified in the MoA) the Collaboration Sponsor should start planning for the five-year review of the partnership. Wherever possible the timeframe for this should align with the associated Programme Approval process and any partner quality assurance or external accreditation requirements.

4. Recruitment Partnership Models

Refer to section 2.3 of the [Education Partnerships Policy](#) for the list of applicable partnership models.

This section covers education partnership models that provide a route for students at a partner organisation to progress to a University of Southampton degree programme. Once admitted to the University's programme the partner is not involved in the delivery of the University of Southampton award.

For further information contact the [Partnerships team](#) within the Global Recruitment, Admissions and Marketing Directorate.

Stage 1 – Strategic Approval and Initial Partner Due Diligence

Responsible	Collaboration Sponsor
Accountable	Faculty Operations Board (FOB) International Executive Board (delegated to Partner Confirmation Panel)
Consulted	ADI, HoS, DHoSE, DoI, Finance, Professional Service Teams across SAAA and GRAM as applicable.
Informed	EPSC (via PCP standing item)
Documentation	International Partnership Proposal form; Risk Assessment
Associated Process	TBC fee discount approval route Export Control Group (referral by PCP where applicable)

1.1 The Collaboration Sponsor consults School and Faculty stakeholders:

- Faculty Education & Quality Enhancement Manager (FEQEM) / Head of Faculty Student Administration (HoFSA) and Deputy Head of School Education (DHoSE) to confirm the appropriate partnership model and approval route.

- Associate Dean International (ADI) / Director of Internationalisation (DoI) and Faculty Finance Manager to develop the business case, risk assessment and to discuss the strategic fit.

1.2 The Collaboration Sponsor completes the International Partnership Proposal Form and submits it to the ADI for endorsement. The form is reviewed by an International Partnerships Manager, who will provide additional partner information and strategic context.

1.3 The Collaboration Sponsor arranges for completed documentation to be considered by Faculty Operations Board (FOB) following local faculty protocols. This should include consideration of strategic fit, resource requirements and approval of any proposed fee discount.

1.4 Once FOB support is secured, the ADI is responsible for seeking approval to proceed from the Partner Confirmation Panel (PCP), a sub-group of the International Executive Board, and communicating the outcome to the Collaboration Sponsor and consulted stakeholders listed in 1.1.

Stage 2 – Partnership Approval and Academic Quality Assurance

Responsible	Collaboration Sponsor
Accountable	School Programme Committee (SPC)
Consulted	DHoSE, Programme Team, FEQEM/HoFSA, GRAM and CQA team
Informed	ADI, EPSC (Enhanced Progression only)
Documentation	Due Diligence Checklist for Enhanced Progression and Progression Agreements; Curriculum Mapping (Enhanced Progression only)
Associated Process	Entry Requirements and Admissions Policy Group (ERAP) reporting to AQSS.

2.1 The Collaboration Sponsor completes the Due Diligence Checklist in consultation with relevant professional service teams and the partner. The

Checklist outlines the academic due diligence requirements, including entry and qualification equivalency.

2.2 (for enhanced progressions only) The Collaboration Sponsor completes the curriculum mapping exercise in consultation with the Programme Team and the partner. The University must be satisfied that the partner programme(s) provide seamless progression to the University of Southampton programme(s). Students typically join year 2 of the University of Southampton undergraduate programme. School Programme Committee (SPC) must be satisfied that the curriculum and learning outcomes of the partner programme at part 1 are equivalent to those achieved on the Southampton part 1 programme. The curriculum mapping must demonstrate this.

2.3 The Collaboration Sponsor arranges for the completed Due Diligence Checklist and (for enhanced progressions only) the curriculum mapping to be considered at School Programme Committee.

2.3.1 Where the partnership spans multiple schools, each participating school must approve this.

2.3.2 Where applicable, the Faculty Education Partnership Advisory Group should consider the proposal prior to submission to SPC.

2.4 The Secretary of the SPC is responsible for communicating the outcome of stage 2 to the Collaboration Sponsor and reporting enhanced progression paperwork to EPSC for note.

Stage 3 – Memorandum of Agreement (MoA)

Responsible	Collaboration Sponsor
Accountable	President and Vice Chancellor or their authorised signatories (as recommended by Legal Services)
Consulted	Professional Service Teams across SAAA and GRAM as applicable. May include admissions, student records, fees and visas.
Informed	EPSC (annual report), SPC

Documentation	Draft agreement; Legal Template or Legal Request Form for off-template agreements.
Associated Process	Programme Enhancement Action Plan updated for enhanced progressions

3.1 A legal agreement must be in place and signed by both parties before any arrangement commences.

3.2 The Collaboration Sponsor is responsible for notifying the International Partnership Manager that the arrangement is ready for drafting (supplying evidence of stages 1 and 2 approvals) and should liaise with the partner regarding their requirements for the MoA.

3.3 The IPM assigned to the proposal is responsible for drafting the agreement on UoS legal templates and advising when this will be available for the partner to review. The Collaboration Sponsor is responsible for briefing the IPM and Legal team about the requirements. Bespoke arrangements may require referral to Legal Services.

4.5 The IPM will liaise between the partner and the Collaboration Sponsor regarding any queries or amend requests, coordinating the drafting process with Legal Services when necessary.

4.6 The IPM arranges for the finalised agreement wording to be signed by an authorised signatory at Southampton and sent to the partner for countersigning. They will notify the Collaboration Sponsor when complete.

4.7 The Collaboration Sponsor is responsible for notifying further stakeholders as identified in 1.1 of the completion of the procedure and circulating the countersigned agreement for their records. IPMs maintain a Partnership List that is reported to EPSC at its first meeting each academic year.

4.8 The IPM is responsible for updating the International Office Partnership Database with countersigned agreement and maintaining accurate records of the partnership.

4.9 Associated process: Programme Creation (for new proposals). Once the programme and partnership have been approved and the countersigned agreement is in place, the programme team should liaise with the Curriculum Quality Assurance (CQA) team to arrange programme set-up.

Implementation and Review

Responsible	Collaboration Sponsor
Accountable	School Programme Committee
Consulted	Programme and Module Leads, International Partnerships Managers, Professional Service teams (admin & assessment, admissions, fees, student records, visas)
Informed	PCP, EPSC
Documentation	Partnership Engagement Plan; Curriculum Mapping (enhanced progressions only)
Associated Process	Annual programme monitoring exercise

5.1 Promotional materials produced by the partner must be reviewed by the University to ensure that branding and messaging is consistent with the terms of the MoA.

5.2 The Collaboration Sponsor is responsible for overseeing the partnership and operational delivery, and liaising with the Programme Team and the University's professional services as required to resolve any issues as they arise.

5.3 The Programme Lead is responsible for notifying the Collaboration Sponsor and partner prior to major change of curriculum of programmes involved in the partnership. An assessment of whether the change necessitates a review of the curriculum mapping should be undertaken, and the outcome taken to the relevant School Programme Committee for consideration and approval/ note as appropriate.

5.4 The Collaboration Sponsor is responsible for regular review of the performance of the partnership arrangement in accordance with their

partnership engagement plan. Updates should be reported to the International Partnership Manager assigned to the partnership.

5.5 In the fourth year of operation (unless otherwise specified in the MoA) the Collaboration Sponsor should start planning for the five-year review of the partnership.